

Carleton University  
Fall 2018  
Department of English

English 4915 Advanced Writing Workshop:  
Short Forms--Poetry and Fiction.

**Prerequisites:** Permission of the instructor or fourth-year Honours standing in English, a 3000-level creative writing workshop. (See instructor's notes below regarding extension of eligibility to students with comparable creative writing experience.)

**Time:** Wednesdays 11:35 – 2:25 p.m.

**Location:** 374 UC (*confirm on Carleton Central*)

**Instructor:** David Stymeist

**Office:** 1819 DT

**Phone:** 520-2600 Ext. 2431

**Office Hours:** Weds. 2:30-3:30. Students can also request an appointment that meets their schedule—contact instructor via email.

**Email:** [david.stymeist@carleton.ca](mailto:david.stymeist@carleton.ca)

Alternate: [dstymeist@yahoo.ca](mailto:dstymeist@yahoo.ca)

## Introduction

This workshop allows writers to workshop and explore shorter creative forms: flash fiction, short poetry, short-short stories, prose poems. “Brevity is the soul of wit” is one of Shakespeare’s more famous aphorisms. Some of the most effective and engaging writing is brief, compact, precise. Do not mistake length for complexity or subtlety—often the most haunting phrases of our language are brief and to the point. Smaller can be sharper!

Poetry traditionally is often brief, personal, and often focused on a single incident. Short verse forms such as the haiku, the sonnet, the song lyric, the couplet, the ghazal have traditionally served to crystalize and confine this type of writing. As well, contemporary poets, such as Lynn Crosbie, Leonard Cohen, Jen Bevens, Rupi Kaur, John Berryman, Souvankham Thammavongsa, have



Like a bird on the wire,  
like a drunk in a midnight choir  
I have tried in my way to be free.  
Like a worm on a hook,  
like a knight from some old fashioned book  
I have saved all my ribbons for thee.  
If I, if I have been unkind,  
I hope that you can just let it go by.  
If I, if I have been untrue  
I hope you know it was never to you.

used the affordances of short free-verse poetry to imply large and complex narratives.

In this contemporary-digital age, where audiences expect to be engaged immediately, we also have seen the advent and proliferation of very short fiction, such as flash fiction, twitterature, the dribble, the drabble, and microfiction. The advent of new technologies such as cell phones and social media platforms like Instagram have spawned new fiction forms based on immediacy and brevity. Alongside the current appetite for shorter forms, there has been a long and rich history of writers who have employed short-short fiction forms. Authors such as Ernest Hemmingway, Franz Kafka, Lydia Davis, Michio Tsuzuki, Margaret Atwood, Naguib Mahfouz, come to mind.

As a workshop, this course offers the singular opportunity to strengthen your skills both as a creative writer and as an editor of shorter forms. Roughly every two weeks, you will be handing in drafts of your own original poems and short-short stories for the rest of the class to read, discuss, and offer constructive, supportive criticism. As well, there will be a number of assigned readings on the craft of writing.

While we will be spending much time workshopping our fellow writers' work, we will also be investigating the work of established poets and fiction writers. At the end of the term, you will present your revised work in a portfolio and submit it for grading.

## **Participation**

Since this is a workshop, every student needs to attend, read assigned texts, read and comment on fellow student's work, and come prepared to engage in lively discussions.

Part of being a good writer is to become a great reader of other people's work. The more you are willing to put into the class, the more you (and us) will get out of it!

## **Workshop Structure and Expectations**

As this is an advanced workshop, students will be expected to write independently on topics that interest them without the need for individual prompts. (I can provide prompts if you need them on an individual basis)

Your writing is due in hardcopy at the beginning of class the week before we are to discuss it. We will pass your work around and then take it home to read. This lets everyone have the time necessary to read your work and comment on it thoroughly.

Workshop protocols:

- Everyone reads and writes comments on your classmate's work before class starts.

- › The author reads their work aloud in class. The author can preface their work before they read.
- › The class discusses the work at length.
- › If your work is being “workshopped,” you should let the debate take its own course and don’t intervene. You can offer clarification after the discussion has ceased.
- › Record significant comments in order to assist in the revision process.

## Grades

Active Participation 10%  
*(discussion in class,  
 prompt submission of poems,  
 reading preparation, attendance)*

Editorial Participation 15%  
*(editorial attention to other students’ work,  
 quality of contribution to the workshop process)*

Review 20%

Final Portfolio (16-20 pages of poetry) 55%

## Workshop Schedule

Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> Fall Term Begins. Introductory Class. Bring in a Favorite short work to read to the class.

Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Composing Short Fiction and Poetry. (Group A handout)

(Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> Last day to change courses or sections, including auditing, for winter term courses.)

Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

(Sept. 30<sup>st</sup> Last day for withdrawal from winter term with full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.)

Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> Group A Workshop (Group B handout); Review Due.

Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Fall Reading Break.

Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> Guest Writer. Discussion.

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> Group B Workshop

Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> Final Portfolio Due. Film Screening.

Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> Final class. Class Readings.

## **Application Process**

Enrollment in this workshop is limited (max. 15 students).

A portfolio must be sent to [english@carleton.ca](mailto:english@carleton.ca) by **July 30<sup>th</sup>**. (If the class is not full, late submissions may be considered by the instructor).

Include ENGL 4915 PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION as the subject line.

Acceptance is at the discretion of the instructor and is not guaranteed.

Note: 4<sup>th</sup> Year Standing in English and prior Creative Writing Workshop experience are typically required, but students with comparable experience can submit a portfolio.

Portfolio Submission Guidelines:

1. A cover page with your full name, Carleton email, and student ID number
2. A brief statement (maximum 250-300 words) indicating a few writers who may have influenced your writing, why you want to take this workshop, and your previous writing/workshopping experience. Note your current Carleton program and year as well
3. A sample of your work of no more than 10 pages in total. (Use 12-point font, standard margins, and each page should include both your name and page number. Word or PDF file format preferred) Select your best, most polished work. All forms/subjects are acceptable. These samples do not need to be short forms.

Decisions will be sent to students by email. As there is no guarantee a student will be accepted into this workshop, students are advised to register in other courses until the final selection has been made.

### About the Instructor

David Stymeist's collection, *The Bone Weir*, was published by Frontenac House in 2016 and was shortlisted for the Canadian Author's Association award for Poetry. His creative work has appeared in numerous magazines, including *The Antigonish Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *The Fiddlehead*.



He teaches Creative Writing, Crime Fiction, Digital Humanities, Renaissance Literature, and Aboriginal Literature at Carleton University. His critical essays and reviews have appeared in academic journals, such as *Studies in English Literature*, *Essays in Renaissance Culture*, *Mosaic*, and *College Teaching*.

He grew up as a non-indigenous member of a mixed family on O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, is the editor and founder of the micro-press, Textualis, and is the current president of VERSe Ottawa, which runs VerseFest, Ottawa's annual poetry festival as well as the City of Ottawa's Poet Laureate program.

### Course Regulations

The mark distribution for the year will be Term Grade: 100%. Class participation marks will include participation in class discussion, Prompt submission of your writing, reading preparation, and consistent attendance. Consistent attendance is required in this class; students failing to attend an absolute **minimum of 30%** of the classes will not receive a grade for their final portfolio.

All assignments must be handed in on the date specified unless cleared previously with the professor. Assignments must be handed to me in person or to the drop box in the English department office (1812 Dunton Tower) on the due date. If you choose to use the drop box, you must be prepared to incur any late penalties that may accumulate due to the unlikely occurrence of the paper's loss or misfiling.

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day. Assignments without medical extension will not be accepted after two weeks of the due date. No faxes or emails of assignments will be accepted. Please keep a copy of your assignment in case of loss by any cause. Students can expect to receive graded feedback in a timely manner; the instructor reserves the right to limit commentary on late assignments and portfolios. Students are required to submit all major assignments in order to pass the course as a whole.

Class etiquette: All digital activity in the class with personal devices should be directly connected to class activity; in other words, you shouldn't be checking your Facebook/Instagram page.

### **Grading System:**

Assignments in this course will be graded using the letter grading system: A-, A, A+ (Excellent); B-, B, B+ (Good); C-, C, C+ (Satisfactory); D, D+ (Minimal pass); F (Failure). Percentage conversion: A+ (90-100%), A (85-89), A- (80-84), B+ (77-79), B (73-76), B- (70-72), C+ (67-69), C (63-66), C- (60-62), D+ (57-59), D (53-56), D (50-52), F (0-49).

Note that standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **Plagiarism**

The University Senate defines plagiarism as *"presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own."*

This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

### **Pregnancy obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website:

[carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website:

[carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](https://carleton.ca/pmc)

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>